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ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS:
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 11 July 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit information on the effects of sanctions on the environment in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the Economic and Social Council under agenda item 6 (a), entitled "Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development".

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

EFFECTS OF SANCTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Although the environment has not been specifically included in the United Nations Security Council sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there is no doubt that their practical effects affect this field as well.

The sanctions have enormous political, economic and social consequences and, a fact of no less importance, affect the environment in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia since it is an integral part of development which, as an option of the international community was confirmed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

In conditions characterized by the effects of the sanctions, the already adverse economic trends in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have deteriorated, unemployment and social tensions have gone up, markets are being closed, transfer of know-how and technology has come to a stop and international cooperation has been almost completely interrupted, while the exploitation level of natural resources, even of those under the regime of special protection, has risen significantly, increasing the risk and threat to natural and cultural assets and diminishing the readiness of, and possibility for, society to invest in environmental protection and promotion.

The impoverishment of the entire population as a consequences of the disastrous effects of the sanctions on the economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has an enormous negative backlash effect on the field of the environment.

Owing to the suspension of Yugoslavia's trade relations with the outside world, and especially owing to the diminishing availability of energy, the economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has increasingly to resort to the exploitation of its own energy sources of inferior quality, which increases the level of environmental degradation.

Because of the sanctions, it is not always possible to substitute imported raw materials and intermediaries. In addition, problems arise from technological limitations and the quality of domestic raw materials and intermediaries. This is a frequent cause of an even greater level of environmental pollution, the effects of which can be felt beyond the local area. The impossibility of importing spare parts for the facilities originating in the countries which resorted to sanctions increases the risk of possible disasters not only for the facilities and constructions in which these parts were to be built, but also more widely.

The sanctions have rendered impossible the implementation of a particularly important environmental project: the idea of Montenegro as an environmental state.

Because of the sanctions and their adverse effects on the overall development of the country, the natural and cultural heritage under the protection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Durmitor, Kotor, Stari Ras with the monasteries of Sopocani and Studenica) has also been brought into question.

The exclusion of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from the PHARE programme and from cooperation with financial institutions (World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank) and with international institutions in the field of environment (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme, UNESCO) has indefinitely postponed cooperation, which was not only successful but accounted also for the definition of a modern approach to, and philosophy of environmental protection promotion.

Regional and bilateral cooperation with neighbouring or contiguous countries in the field of environmental protection and promotion has been interrupted, which has had extremely negative effects on the entire region.

Scientific and technological cooperation have been discontinued. Study visits and participation at seminars, as well as the use of databases within the framework of numerous international and regional organizations (United Nations, UNEP, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union, the Mediterranean Plan of Action, regional cooperation in the protection of the Danube, etc.) have been reduced to a minimum.

The isolation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has brought about an almost complete information blockage and the discontinuation of almost all forms of communication with the outside world.

Although the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is the signatory of 51 international conventions, owing to the sanctions, implementation of those conventions and Yugoslavia's accession to new international agreements and treaties in this field have become extremely difficult.

No accidents have thus far been registered in the FRY as a consequence of the transboundary movement of dangerous wastes. However, some accidents have been registered, caused by the disposal and movement of dangerous wastes in the territory of the FRY. The largest accident of potential risk for the pollution of rivers took place in the dangerous wastes pond at Mojkovac (Montenegro) in November 1992. A large environmental disaster was prevented by the quick intervention and assistance of the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the European Economic Community, which proves that problems of environmental protection know no boundaries and require participation by the international community in their solution.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a transit country, which increases the risk of accidents and disasters which can be caused by transboundary movements of dangerous wastes.

It should also be borne in mind that there is an ever greater number of participants in international trade and that, owing to the situation caused by the sanctions, there is also an increase in illicit trade, that is in transboundary movements of dangerous and other wastes.

As a result of the energy crisis in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia due to the impossibility of importing oil and oil derivatives, there are instances of large-scale deforestation.

Cooperation in the protection of the Adriatic Sea and international river flows has come to a stop, which is not only the problem of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but also of its neighbours and or broader regional cooperation.

Particularly negative are the effects of the sanctions which can bring about a breakdown of the environment quality control and monitoring system due to diminishing budget revenues and a shortage of parts necessary for the normal functioning of the system and the system of overall environmental protection.

Bearing in mind that the sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are a violation of basic human rights, including the right to live in a healthy environment, and the fact that they threaten the biological survival of the people, they should be lifted forthwith.